



## DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

### News Release

**NEIL ABERCROMBIE**  
GOVERNOR

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WILLIAM J. AILA JR.  
CHAIRPERSON

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For Immediate Release: October 26, 2012

#### **HUNTERS ENCOURAGED TO HELP CONTROL INVASIVE AXIS DEER ON BIG ISLAND**

##### **Declaration of axis deer as a harmful species allows hunting without restrictions of season or bag limit**

HONOLULU — The Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) voted today to authorize a declaration that will allow licensed hunters on the island of Hawaii to control axis deer (*Axis axis*) without the requirement of a special permit. Prior to today's vote, hunting deer on Hawai'i island would have required a special permit because axis deer are not identified as a game mammal on Hawai'i Island.

Today's vote by the BLNR removes that permitting requirement, and allows hunters to control deer on public lands without restrictions for season or bag limit. All other hunting rules, such as hunting only daylight hours and the requirement of a valid hunting license, remain in effect. Hunting on private lands requires the permission of the landowner.

Under the declaration, Chairperson William J. Aila, Jr., identified axis deer as being harmful to agriculture, native plants, and wildlife on the island of Hawai'i, as well as constituting a threat to public safety (HAR 13-124-7 [g]). On Maui and Moloka'i, where axis deer may already be taken without regard to season or bag limit on public lands, axis deer have caused severe damage to local agriculture and forest resources, and have increased erosion and sedimentation that contributes to damage of coral reefs and near shore fisheries.

Maui County Agricultural Specialist Kenneth Yamamura estimates that deer damage to Maui Nui farms, ranches and resorts exceeded \$2 million over a two-year period, with an additional \$1 million spent to remove or exclude deer from those locations. The deer readily consume a variety of crop species, and feces left behind on farmlands can make remaining crops unsellable by federal regulations. The presence of axis deer can also lead to automobile collisions, as seen on Maui earlier this week when a 45-year old Kihei resident struck a deer while driving an ATV.

In the 1970s, a proposal came before the Land Board to introduce deer to Hawai'i island to provide additional hunting opportunities. After much deliberation, the board disapproved the proposed introduction on the grounds that the introduction of deer to the island would result in unacceptable levels of damage to natural resources, including economic damage to local farmers. It remains the policy of board and the current administration that deer should not be introduced to Hawai'i island.

This policy was recently affirmed by the state Legislature, which passed a law in 2012 prohibiting the possession and interisland transport of deer statewide. The law, originating from a bill sponsored by Senator Gil Kahele, provides for serious penalties for violations, which include mandatory fines of not less than \$10,000, payment of costs to eradicate the deer and their progeny, and possible imprisonment. Fines collected for convictions under that law may be used to manage or control populations of introduced wildlife and mitigate any damages caused.

Under U.S. federal law, a federal judge recently found two individuals, Jeffrey Grundhauser of Maui and Daniel Rocha of Hawai'i Island, guilty of illegally exchanging 14 mouflon sheep from Hawai'i island for \$1,000 and four axis deer from Maui. One deer died during the transport by helicopter, conducted by Thomas Hauptman of Maui in December of 2009. This exchange violated the federal Lacey Act and was the first known introduction of axis deer to Hawai'i island.

In early 2011, DLNR received credible reports of deer sightings on Hawai'i island and confirmed the presence of wild deer there with photographic evidence in April of that year. Since then, department staff and partners at the Big Island Invasive Species Committee have been working to eliminate the deer from the island in order to protect agricultural and natural resources. To date, three deer have been dispatched and it is not known how many more may remain on the island. Successful elimination of deer from Hawai'i island is expected to require a considerable investment of public resources and the department has notified hunters and landowners that any assistance they can provide is appreciated.

Under the declaration issued by Chairperson William J. Aila, licensed hunters are encouraged to assist in the effort to protect Hawai'i island's natural resources and farms by harvesting any deer encountered in public hunting areas on Hawai'i island. With written landowner permission, licensed hunters may also hunt deer on private lands. In accordance with the department's hunting regulations, there are no restrictions on the days or seasons that deer may be hunted on the big island, and no limits on the numbers that may be taken. Hunters are required to follow all other applicable hunting regulations. The declaration is required by rule to be term-limited and will last for a period of five years, from **October 26, 2012 through October 25, 2017**.

The DLNR requests that the number and location of any deer taken be voluntarily reported to the Division of Forestry and Wildlife office in Hilo, at (808)974-4221.

To report a suspected sighting of axis deer on the Big Island, call (808) 443-4036.

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Images of axis deer on Maui and the Big Island, as well as damaged caused by non-native axis deer species to agricultural crops and native forests can be found at <https://plus.google.com/101613020396360217549?hl=en#photos/101613020396360217549/albums/5803768288357229041>

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